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published in

European Union Politics
2007

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1177/1465116507073284](https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116507073284)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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citation for published version (APA)

Steenbergen, M. R., Edwards, E. E., & de Vries, C. E. (2007). Who's Cueing Whom? Mass-elite linkages and the future of European integration. *European Union Politics*, 8(1), 13-35.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116507073284>

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European Union Politics 2007 8: 13

DOI: 10.1177/1465116507073284

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European Union Politics

DOI: 10.1177/1465116507073284

Volume 8 (1): 13–35

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Who's Cueing Whom?

Mass–Elite Linkages and the Future of European Integration

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ABSTRACT

The 2005 French and Dutch referendum campaigns were characterized by an alleged disconnect between pro-European political elites and Eurosceptic masses. Past evidence regarding elite–mass linkages in the context of European integration has been conflicting. Whereas some scholars argue that political elites respond to the changing preferences of their electorates, others suggest that party elites cue the mass public through a process of information and persuasion. We contend that these conflicting results stem from the reciprocal nature of elite–mass linkages and estimate a series of dynamic simultaneous equations models to account for this reverse causation. Using Eurobarometer and expert survey data from 1984–2002, we find evidence of a dual-process model, whereby party elites both respond to and shape the views of their supporters. We also find that the strength of these results is contingent on several factors, including the type of electoral system, intra-party dissent and voter characteristics.

KEY WORDS

- cueing effects
- dynamic simultaneous equations models
- Euroscepticism
- political parties
- public opinion

In recent years, 'Euroscepticism' has become a standard theme in the literature on public opinion about European integration. Scholars generally agree that the age of 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) died with the Maastricht Treaty and gave way to a 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Although there have been downturns in public support for European integration before, it is clear that Europeans have grown considerably more weary of the integration process than they once were. The outcomes of the recent referendums in France and the Netherlands illustrate this new public sentiment towards the European Union (EU).

Euroscepticism may be as much a reaction of discontent with the *politics* of European integration as it is a reaction of discontent with specific policies. In the aftermath of the French and Dutch referendums of 2005, there was a great deal of discussion about an alleged gap between the political elites and the masses. Many argued that pro-European political elites had been so eager to pursue further integration that they had lost track of the concerns and desires of the citizens. They also failed to persuade citizens of the wisdom of their policies. Instead, critics argued, the elites had moved ahead with European integration in a vacuum of public support, as became painfully evident during the referendums. The French and Dutch were frustrated that they had been ignored by the elites, and this resulted in a resounding 'no' against the European Constitution.

Accusations that political elites are out of touch are rarely new and usually politically motivated. This is undoubtedly true for the recent referendums, which were unmitigated debacles for pro-European politicians and provided ample ammunition for their opponents. Nevertheless, these accusations demonstrate once more the importance of understanding mass–elite linkages in the process of European integration. Who is driving integration – the masses, the elites, or perhaps both? Put differently, who is cueing whom?

Mass–elite linkages can take two forms. First, political elites can adopt whatever position the mass public takes on European integration. This bottom-up connection – Carrubba (2001) calls it an 'electoral connection' – assures correspondence between masses and elites through a process of representation. Second, mass publics can adopt the positions of the political elites. This top-down process assures correspondence between masses and elites through a process of information and persuasion. The breakdown of either process could cause a disconnection between masses and elites.

There is now considerable evidence for both of these processes. Support for a bottom-up process is most prominent in Carrubba (2001), while evidence for a top-down process is found in a variety of studies (Feld and Wildgen, 1976; Franklin et al., 1994; Wessels, 1995; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002; Ray, 2003). However, with few exceptions (most notably Wessels, 1995), there have been no systematic efforts to estimate the impact of both processes

simultaneously. Moreover, efforts to understand the contingent nature of cueing effects have only recently begun and have focused exclusively on the top-down linkage (Ray, 2003). Thus, our understanding of mass–elite linkages in the context of European integration remains incomplete.

This paper revisits the question of who is cueing whom. Using Eurobarometer and expert survey data for the period 1984–2002, we estimate a series of dynamic simultaneous equations models that allow for both top-down and bottom-up effects. Our focus is on linkages between national party elites and their supporters, since this has been the emphasis of most prior studies and is a particularly good place to observe the politics of European integration. We consider how context and the attributes of political parties and their supporters influence the nature of the linkage between these actors. We conclude by drawing out the implications of our findings for the future of European integration.

The politics of European integration: Two views

According to received wisdom, at least until the late 1980s the process of European integration was accompanied by a ‘permissive consensus’ on the part of the European citizenry. The technical nature of the European project and its marginal impact on the individual lives of citizens created a scenario in which an ill-informed, uninterested and generally favourably disposed public gave political elites free rein in pursuing integration. For the most part, the permissive consensus thesis suggests that there is no mass–elite linkage or that, if one exists, it is ever so slight and runs from top to bottom (see Feld and Wildgen, 1976).

Much has been made of the ‘erosion’ of this permissive consensus in the post-Maastricht era. The EU of the 1990s and of today is more relevant to the lives and interests of European citizens, as it increasingly affects their individual welfare and involves policies (notably the common currency, citizenship, immigration, the common defence and foreign policy) that are both highly salient and highly controversial (Gabel, 2000; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Moreover, recent scholarship casts doubt on the permissive consensus theory. Research on public support for European integration suggests that even relatively uninterested and ill-informed individuals hold meaningful and systematic preferences on the EU. Relying on self-interest and macro-economic explanations of political attitudes, utilitarian theory implies that those who experience direct material gains from EU policies tend to support integration, whereas those who are hurt by such policies are likely to be against it (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998a, 1998b; Anderson and Reichert, 1995). Work on national identity and support for integration also

suggests that the public hold meaningful preferences on the EU but that their evaluations rely on symbolic political considerations, i.e. feelings of national identity (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Netjes and Edwards, 2005).

European integration as a bottom-up process

This work on public opinion and mass behaviour suggests the potential for a bottom-up connection, whereby mass publics shape elite positions over European integration. One implication of the EU becoming a more salient issue and of individuals holding systematic preferences on European integration is that rational political parties have a strong incentive to base their positions on EU policies on electorate preferences (Carrubba, 2001). Although parties may not be seeking to turn the EU into an issue to attract new voters, surely they are paying attention to their constituents in order to avoid losing them. If it is true that voters are now paying attention to the EU, then no rational party would pursue unpopular policies. Instead, parties would actively monitor the electorate, in particular their constituents, making sure to be on the same wavelength on EU matters. Note that, in contrast to the permissive consensus argument, here constituents do not simply loosely define the space in which political elites can manoeuvre; rather, constituents continually feed party elites with information about their preferences, to which these elites invariably respond. In sum, the causal arrow goes from constituents to party elites.

In a recent article, Carrubba (2001) finds that there is evidence for this bottom-up connection in the EU and, moreover, that this is not a post-Maastricht phenomenon. Using a two-stage least squares regression model and party manifesto data from 1977–92, Carrubba (2001: 153) demonstrates ‘that the more pro-EU the electorate is, the more pro-EU national parties tend to be’. His results are particularly suggestive since he focuses on the EU pre-Maastricht. It seems reasonable that we would observe public opinion exerting an influence on parties in a post-1992 Europe in which the EU is salient and contested, but Carrubba shows that national political parties were responding to voters’ preferences on European integration years before the EU became such a heightened issue. Carrubba’s results are provocative and persuasive, in part because his estimates of the bottom-up effect control for potential reverse causation.

European integration as a top-down process

At least one other interpretation of the correlation between mass and elite preferences on European integration is possible: the causal arrow may flow

from elites to masses. This, indeed, is the essence of top-down theories of integration, which stress that citizens take cues from political elites, including party leaders, and adjust their views to be more or less in line with those elites (Feld and Wilgden, 1976; Franklin et al., 1994; Wessels, 1995; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002; Ray, 2003). One theoretical impetus for the top-down view is a more pessimistic reading of the cognitive limitations of citizens than is typically found in bottom-up theories. Top-down theorists argue that European integration presents sufficiently technical issues that citizens may find it hard to formulate a view. For instance, it may be difficult to make utilitarian calculations about the impact of European integration, because it is unclear how the EU affects a person's life (Chong, 2000). Boundedly rational (Simon, 1985) citizens may look for elite cues, including those from parties they tend to support, and may adjust their views accordingly, either through information or through persuasion (Zaller, 1992; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). The top-down view may also represent a division of labour between citizens and elites, whereby citizens expect elites to provide them with information that can form their opinions.

There is impressive evidence of top-down effects on public opinion about European integration. The 1989 European Election Study provides evidence that the opinions of party supporters are for the most part related to the opinions taken by parties (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Using party manifesto data as an indicator of a party's position on European integration, Wessels analyses the direction of influence between the parties and their electorates and finds that 'parties are able to mobilise their supporters, bringing them closer to the party, whether for or against the EC' (Wessels, 1995: 161). In his test of various theories of support for integration, Gabel (1998b) demonstrates that, alongside utilitarian considerations, elite cues are an important influence on public opinion. Similarly, Anderson (1998) illustrates that at least in some countries, notably Denmark and France, political influences are a key determinant of public support for the EU.

One of the most recent and informative contributions to this body of literature is Ray's (2003) evaluation of the conditional influence of party positions on public opinion about the EU. Ray points out that the empirical record of elite cueing is rather mixed when it comes to European integration and argues that the contradictory results stem from the conditional nature of partisan influence. His findings indicate that the effect of party positions on the electorate varies with levels of disagreement among parties, party unity, issue salience and party attachment. Ray's work is a significant advance over many of the previous studies in that, like Carrubba (2001), he controls for reverse causation.¹

A conditional dual-process model

Much of the literature gives predominance to either the bottom-up or the top-down model of European integration. We start from the assumption that both are operating simultaneously. On the one hand, it is increasingly costly for political parties to ignore public opinion. Although the issue has not yet led to a wholesale transformation of party competition in Europe, political entrepreneurs such as Haider in Austria, Le Pen in France and Wilders in the Netherlands seem eager to wake the 'sleeping giant' (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). On the other hand, it is also clear that politicians hope to manufacture the views that they would like to represent. Europeans may not be complete *tabulae rasae* when it comes to European integration, but neither are their views completely determined and unsusceptible to persuasion and information.

We propose, then, a dual-process model of European integration, in which elites simultaneously seek to influence and to respond to the mass public. Such a model requires that we estimate reciprocal effects between masses and elites. Reciprocal causation is not just a statistical nuisance that one has to deal with in order to test one's favourite theory, be it bottom-up or top-down. Rather, reciprocal causation is of substantive interest, because bottom-up and top-down processes may be mutually reinforcing.

At the same time, we should allow the bottom-up and top-down effects to be conditional in nature. Too much of the literature assumes that these effects unfold in a homogeneous manner across different contexts. Ray's (2003) work has begun to acknowledge the conditional nature of top-down processes. We believe that this work should be expanded by considering a greater variety of moderators and by extending the condition-seeking approach to bottom-up processes as well. In the end, we may find that the bottom-up and top-down processes operate uniformly. But such a finding cannot be a foregone conclusion, because bottom-up and top-down processes may respond to the electoral context of a nation, as well as to attributes of party elites and supporters. We now consider these factors and suggest how they could influence mass–elite linkages.

Electoral context

Three aspects of a nation's electoral context may influence mass–elite linkages. First, the electoral system matters if we draw a distinction between plurality and proportional representation (PR) systems. In keeping with Wessels (1999), we argue that party elites in PR systems focus on representing the party

median, whereas parties in plurality systems are more concerned with the median voter. Since our focus is on linkages between party elites and party supporters, our prediction is that the bottom-up connection should be stronger in PR than in plurality systems.² Top-down linkages may also be stronger in PR systems because parties tend to be less broad, as factions can split off while still retaining a decent chance of winning seats. Because parties are less broad, they are more likely to present a unified message on the topic of European integration.

A second aspect of electoral context concerns the proximity of an election. Although rational party elites continuously monitor mass preferences for integration, elections should create particularly strong incentives for elites to pay attention to the cues that their supporters give. Evidence for this hypothesis can be found in a study by Wessels (1995). Using Comparative Manifesto Project and Eurobarometer data from 1973 to 1991, he shows that, in the nine months prior to an election, the relationship is largely bottom-up, as constituents exert a strong influence on the EU planks of the election manifestos. That said, during the pre- and post-election periods, i.e. three months before and after the election, the elite-mass linkages regarding European integration are by and large top-down. During these periods, parties may tune out constituents' concerns and constituents may stop paying attention to issues, relying instead on party cues.

Finally, referendums provide a powerful mechanism for creating a bottom-up linkage between parties and their supporters. Countries that have referendums provide citizens with an alternative pathway for influencing policy, especially if the referendums are binding. Since it is potentially costly for party elites to embark on policies only to find them repudiated in a referendum, the referendum mechanism provides strong incentives for political parties to align their policy stances with the positions of their constituents. Party elites can no longer safely assume that their supporters will follow their lead in referendums (Siune et al., 1994; Buch and Hansen, 2002), as the Dutch and French social democrats discovered in the referendums over the European Constitution. On the contrary, it may be increasingly the case that parties want to know how their supporters feel before deciding which side to take in the campaign.

Referendums may also influence top-down linkages. Party elites who know that major EU policy changes have to go through a referendum have strong incentives to spend more time informing and persuading their supporters of the benefits of their views. Thus, referendums may instil in party elites a habit of taking their case to the public, which should strengthen the top-down connection.

Attributes of parties and the party system

Several attributes of political parties are important in shaping the nature of mass–elite linkages. First, greater issue salience should enhance the influence of parties on voters. If an issue is salient to a party, one can expect the party to vocalize its position clearly and frequently. Such a strong signal means that even those who pay relatively little attention to politics are likely to be exposed to the party position (Zaller, 1992). By contrast, parties that place little emphasis on an issue are less likely to send a strong signal about their position, which in turn reduces their ability to cue their electorates. Thus, the more salient European integration is to a party, the more likely the party is to influence its voters (Ray, 2003).

We are less clear about the effect of salience on the bottom-up linkage. On the one hand, parties may make a strategic decision to emphasize European integration because they know that their position corresponds to that of their supporters (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Netjes and Binnema, 2006). On the other hand, salience may be a reflection of the party leadership's strong EU preferences, making it more difficult for party elites to adjust their views to those of their supporters.

Second, the ability of a political party effectively to influence voters on EU issues is conditioned by the degree of intra-party dissent. More unified parties should exert greater influence over party supporters than more divided parties do. European integration has provoked deep tensions inside several major parties, including the French Gaullists, the UK Conservatives, the German Christian Social Union, the Danish and Swedish social democrats, and more recently the French socialists and the Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy. Disagreement within parties about the correct position to take on European integration can be expected to weaken the ability of a party to influence the opinions of its electorate (Ray, 2003; Gabel and Scheve, in this issue). The presentation of competing messages by various party leaders will muddle the cues sent by the party to its supporters (Zaller, 1992). Moreover, cues may be muffled if internal party divisions deter a party from publicly discussing European issues (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004). At the same time, the influence of party supporters might be increased in divided parties, because party elites may arbitrate between competing views by determining what is most popular with party supporters.

At the party system level, Ray (2003) has established that top-down effects are more prominent if there is inter-party dissent. The more consensus on European integration there is among political parties, the less political parties will benefit from stressing the issue. As a result, cues from party elites to their supporters will tend to be subdued, thus weakening the top-down

effect. At the same time, inter-party consensus signifies a lack of competition over European integration. In the words of Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996: 369), 'the lack of inter-party policy differences on European matters makes it difficult for parties to fight elections on European issues' (see also Mair, 2000). This should have the effect of reducing the influence of supporters on party elites, thus weakening the bottom-up connection.

Attributes of party supporters

A final factor affecting the party–electorate linkage concerns the characteristics of the constituents themselves and, specifically, how many constituents are opinion leaders, defined as those citizens who actively discuss politics and seek to persuade others. Such citizens tend to be more interested in and better informed about politics, characteristics that have important implications. On the one hand, elites of parties with large numbers of opinion leaders may have a harder time ignoring the opinions of their constituents. Larger numbers of their party supporters have crystallized views about European integration, making public opinion more difficult to ignore. Opinion leaders pay attention to politics and, if a party moves too far away from its base, opinion leaders will notice and may communicate that information to other potential voters. Therefore, opinion leadership should intensify cue-taking by parties.

There is, however, another side to opinion leadership. As the two-step flow model of communications (Berelson et al., 1954) would predict, party elites have to rely on opinion leaders to get their messages across to supporters. Parties that are starved of opinion leaders and that face a largely inattentive base may find it extremely difficult to get their point across. Opinion leadership may be important for another reason. Steenbergen and Jones (2002) show a particularly strong responsiveness of opinion leaders to party cues. Thus, parties with large numbers of opinion leaders may have an easier time relaying their message, thereby enhancing cueing effects from parties.

Methods

Data and measures

Our data span 1984 to 2002 and come from two sources. First, we use Eurobarometers (EB) to capture public opinion about European integration at the mass level (EB 21, 22, 29, 30, 37, 38, 45.1, 46, 51, 52 and 57.1). Second, we use

Ray's (1999) expert survey and the more recent Chapel Hill expert surveys (for 1999 and 2002) to measure party positions on European integration. Whereas Carrubba (2001) and others have relied on data from the Party Manifesto Project to explore the mass–elite linkage on issues of European integration, we favour using expert survey data because they allow a clearer look at cue-taking when there is no election on the horizon. Party manifestos are strategic documents that are written for an election. These documents are likely to reflect the views of constituents, but they may not provide a good indication of the nature of cueing during times when electoral concerns are less prominent.

Our measure of a party's EU stance is the mean expert rating on a 7-point scale of the party elite's view of European integration (higher values indicate a more favourable position). For purposes of the analysis, this scale was recoded to have a range of –1 to +1, with negative values indicating opposition to European integration and positive values indicating support. To estimate EU support at the mass level we used the following question: 'Generally speaking, do you think that [your country's] membership in the European Union is a good thing, neither good nor bad, or a bad thing.' Support for European integration is measured as the difference between the proportion of a party's support base who believe the EU is a good thing and the proportion who believe it is a bad thing (Carrubba, 2001). This variable also has a theoretical range between –1 and +1.

We consider as a party's support base all those Eurobarometer respondents who share the ideological orientation of that party, where ideology was operationalized through five categories (extreme left, moderate left, centre, moderate right and extreme right). We first determined party ideology using the Chapel Hill, Castles and Mair (1984) and Huber and Inglehart (1995) expert surveys. We then matched a Eurobarometer respondent's ideology to one or more parties in the respondent's country. This procedure is consistent with Carrubba (2001).³

Statistical approach

A major point of difference from Carrubba (2001) and Ray (2003) is that we treat our data as a panel. Carrubba argues strongly against such a conceptualization, but we believe that the data bear all of the hallmarks of a panel. First, we have repeated observations for most of the political parties in our sample (57% of the parties are represented at all six time points; only 3.5% are represented only once). Second, and perhaps more controversially, we maintain that the data about party supporters can also be treated as a panel. It is true, as Carrubba stresses, that the Eurobarometer surveys do not contain

a panel component. As such, no individual respondent is systematically included more than once in the survey. But our analysis focuses not on individuals but on aggregates, specifically on ideological strata. We treat sample statistics in these strata as indicators of the views and demographic characteristics of the support base of a party. Since the same ideological stratum tends to be associated with a given political party at different time points, treating the data about party supporters as a panel seems not only reasonable but necessary to account for autocorrelation. A failure to do so would imply that information about a party's support base at times t and $t + 1$ are independent, which is problematic.

In treating the data as a panel, we encounter the difficulty that some of the predictors are endogenous. Most panel models assume that the predictors are exogenous, but this assumption fails here because of the reciprocal relationship between party elites and party supporters. For example, we would like to predict the EU stance of party elites from the stance of supporters, but the latter may itself reflect the position of party elites. To overcome this problem we estimate a panel model with instrumental variables. Specifically, we estimate the following model:

$$y_{it} = \tilde{y}_{it}\tilde{\gamma} + \tilde{x}_{it}\tilde{\beta} + \mu_i + v_{it}.$$

Here y_{it} is the variable we seek to explain (the EU position of party elites or supporters), \tilde{y}_{it} is a vector of endogenous predictors (the EU position of party supporters and elites, respectively), and \tilde{x}_{it} is a vector of exogenous predictors, which, for identification purposes, has more elements than \tilde{y}_{it} .⁴ Further, μ_i contains unobserved unit effects (i.e. attributes of parties), whereas v_{it} contains random errors across units and time. Owing to the endogenous nature of \tilde{y}_{it} it is correlated with v_{it} . This complicates the estimation of $\tilde{\gamma}$. An instrumental variables approach replaces \tilde{y}_{it} by a prediction based on a series of exogenous variables, thus allowing for consistent estimates. Following Baltagi and Chang (2000), we treat μ_i as random effects, which follow a normal distribution with a mean of zero and a variance of σ^2_{μ} .⁵ The variance components were estimated using the Swamy–Arora method, which can accommodate the unbalanced nature of our data. The fixed effects were estimated using generalized two-stage least squares (G2SLS; Balestra and Varadharajan-Krishnakumar, 1987). All estimations were conducted in Stata version 9.

The exogenous predictors of the positions of party elites were derived mostly from Hooghe et al. (2002). Thus, we include left–right ideology and its square to accommodate the commonly observed curvilinear relationship, where the extreme left and extreme right are the least supportive of European integration. We also incorporate participation in the government as

a predictor, since parties in the government tend to be more favourably disposed towards integration. To take account of the possibility that larger parties tend to be more supportive of the EU, we include electoral vote share. Finally, we add in a dummy variable for mainstream parties (Christian democrats, conservatives, liberals and social democrats) to accommodate the empirical finding that those parties have been the most supportive of the unification process.

In the model for party supporters, we include the following exogenous predictors: median age, proportion of females, proportion of people employed in agriculture, proportion of manual labourers, proportion of non-manual labourers, proportion of executives, proportion of professionals, proportion of unemployed, first, second, and third education and income quartiles, and ideology and ideology squared. These factors have been found to influence opinions at the individual level (see Gabel, 1998a, 1998b) and seem to be good instrumental variables as well. Ideology is also an important control because the same ideological stratum could be the support base for different political parties.

The models for party elites and party supporters also contain a series of country dummy variables. The reason is that we have three levels of analysis in our data: countries, parties and time. Although we could try to model country differences, this is not our primary interest. Hence, we remove country effects by including dummy variables.

Assessing the conditional nature of top-down and bottom-up effects poses special estimation problems since this involves interactions with the endogenous variables. We address these problems here by using a split-sample approach. That is, for a particular moderator we split the sample in an appropriate way and estimate separate models in each subsample. The drawbacks of this approach are twofold. First, it is difficult to determine if differences in effects are significant, and, second, we are limited to considering the impact of one moderator at a time. Thus, out of necessity our enquiry into the moderator effects will be somewhat impressionistic.⁶

Results

Simple models of mass–elite linkages

Table 1 shows the estimates from a model without moderators. These estimates suggest that mass–elite linkages flow in both directions. First, we observe a powerful effect of the electorate on party elites, one that is consistent with Carrubba (2001). But we also observe a significant cueing effect

Table 1 Mass–elite linkages and the EU: Simple models

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Party elites</i>		<i>Supporters</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
EU stance of supporters	0.527***	0.164		
EU stance of party elites			0.068**	0.031
Party ideology	0.304***	0.042		
Party ideology squared	−0.030***	0.004		
Mainstream party	0.452***	0.061		
Party in government	0.078***	0.023		
Electoral vote share	0.003	0.002		
Voter ideology			0.129**	0.052
Voter ideology squared			−0.022**	0.009
Median age			−0.002	0.002
Proportion female			−0.492***	0.184
Proportion agriculture			0.267	0.582
Proportion manual labour			−0.480**	0.270
Proportion non-manual labour			−0.800***	0.220
Proportion executives			0.081	0.287
Proportion professionals			0.545	0.537
Proportion unemployed			−0.909***	0.349
1st education quartile			−0.005	0.012
2nd education quartile			0.003	0.011
3rd education quartile			−0.013	0.010
1st income quartile			−0.052***	0.015
2nd income quartile			0.046***	0.017
3rd income quartile			0.007	0.012
Constant	−1.215***	0.184	0.457*	0.241
σ^2_{μ}	0.518		0.084	
σ^2_v	0.160		0.158	
ρ	0.913		0.218	
Within- R^2	.084		.107	
Between- R^2	.449		.777	
Total R^2	.457		.670	

Notes: Table entries are G2SLS random effects panel estimates and their estimated standard errors. The models include country dummies, which have been suppressed in the table (these are available upon request from the authors). ρ is the proportion of the variance that is due to σ^2_{μ} . $N = 535$.

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$ (one-tailed for EU stances of supporters and EU stances of party elites; two-tailed for all other predictors).

of party elites on party supporters. This effect is weaker than the bottom-up flow, but it is consistent with top-down models of the mass–elite linkage. If party supporters were to move from complete opposition to complete support for the EU, then we would expect an increase in EU support of just over 1 point in the party stance. If the party were to make such a move, then supporters would be expected to move by 0.14 points – a shift of 14 percentage points in net support for the EU. Of course, these are maximum effects that are not entirely realistic, but they give a good sense of the cueing effects in the data.

On the whole, these results lend support to the dual-process model that we have proposed. That is to say, party elites seem responsive to the views of their supporters, but they also help to shape those views. Thus, there is mutual reinforcement between the two types of cueing process. Of course, the results in Table 1 are averages of sorts, as they collapse across the different moderators we have identified. We now consider how these moderators influence the estimates of mass–elite linkages.

Conditional models of mass–elite linkages

Electoral context

Several electoral context effects emerge. First, breaking down the panel by electoral system suggests that both bottom-up and top-down linkages between party elites and supporters are stronger in PR systems (see Table 2).⁷ We observe a statistically significant positive effect of party supporters on elites in PR systems but not in plurality systems. Even more telling is the estimate, which is over five times greater in PR systems.⁸ Likewise, the effect of party elites on supporters is stronger in PR systems, with the effect running in a negative direction in plurality systems.

Turning our attention to the effect of elections in Table 2, we obtain a counter-intuitive finding. First, there appears to be little impact of elections on the magnitude of the top-down linkage between party elites and supporters. Second, although there is a strong and significant effect of supporters on elites in non-election years, the effect dwindles (and becomes insignificant) in election years. One explanation for this finding is that election years pose conflicting demands on party elites. Not only do elites have to cater to their supporters, they may also wish to cater to the median voter, placate potential coalition partners and consider the needs of party activists. In this mix of competing considerations, the weight of party supporters may be less than it is in non-election years. Future research should explore this possibility.

The referendum effects in Table 2 are more in line with our predictions. The bottom-up effects from party supporters on elites are much stronger in

Table 2 Mass–elite linkages and electoral context

		<i>Party elites</i>		<i>Supporters</i>	
<i>Electoral context</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
<i>Electoral system:</i>					
PR	423	0.355**	0.163	0.080**	0.032
Plurality	112	0.067	0.128	−0.068	0.064
<i>Election year:</i>					
No	393	0.489***	0.167	0.054*	0.033
Yes	142	0.028	0.282	0.067	0.059
<i>Referendum provision:</i>					
No	269	0.094	0.156	0.007	0.028
Yes	266	0.378**	0.173	0.071	0.060

Notes: Table entries are G2SLS random effects panel estimates and their estimated standard errors. The estimate for party elites is the effect of the EU stance of party supporters. The estimate for party supporters is the effect of the EU stance of party elites. The models include country dummies and other predictors, which have been suppressed in the table (these are available upon request from the authors).

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$ (one-tailed).

countries that have referendums than in countries that do not. The same is true of the top-down effects, although these fail to reach statistical significance. It seems, then, that referendums force party elites to pay closer attention to their supporters and perhaps also to provide stronger cues to their base.

Party (system) attributes

Table 3 reveals that the linkage between party elites and supporters is shaped to a considerable extent by attributes of the parties and the party system. Considering the role of issue salience first, we see that it moderates the impact of party cues on supporters.⁹ Consistent with Ray (2003), we find that the EU stance of the party leadership influences supporters only if the issue is salient to the party. The impact of salience is less dramatic for the bottom-up connection. Regardless of the salience level, we observe a statistically significant effect from supporters on elites. The effect is slightly larger when the issue is less salient to the party, but this difference is probably not significant.

Internal dissent also appears as an important moderator of mass–elite linkages, as Table 3 reveals.¹⁰ Consistent with Ray (2003) and Gabel and Scheve (in this issue), we find that low dissent strengthens parties' ability to cue their supporters. Indeed, our data suggest that internally divided parties

Table 3 Mass–elite linkages and party (system) attributes

		<i>Party elites</i>		<i>Supporters</i>	
<i>Electoral context</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
<i>Issue salience:</i>					
Low	291	0.509**	0.223	−0.041	0.042
High	244	0.429***	0.148	0.149***	0.053
<i>Intra-party dissent:</i>					
Low	259	0.242**	0.143	0.107**	0.049
High	276	0.390***	0.158	0.047	0.057
<i>Inter-party dissent:</i>					
Low	281	0.054	0.206	0.032	0.030
High	254	0.339**	0.176	0.082*	0.056

Notes: Table entries are G2SLS random effects panel estimates and their estimated standard errors. The estimate for party elites is the effect of the EU stance of party supporters. The estimate for party supporters is the effect of the EU stance of party elites. The models include country dummies and other predictors, which have been suppressed in the table (these are available upon request from the authors).

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$ (one-tailed).

are unable to cue their base. Interestingly, internal dissent helps supporters to leverage influence over their parties. The effect of the EU stance of party supporters on party leaders is slightly larger in relatively divided parties than it is in relatively unified parties.

Finally, inter-party disagreement seems critical especially for bottom-up linkages. A lack of diverging views on European integration among parties means that the viewpoints of party supporters carry little weight. The impact of inter-party dissent on parties' ability to cue their supporters is less clear-cut. Although Ray (2003) argued that variation between the views of parties is critical for cueing supporters, we find little support for that hypothesis here.

Supporter attributes

Finally, let us consider the one attribute of party supporters that we have identified as critical – opinion leadership. Here we use the Eurobarometer opinion leadership index. First, we calculated the proportion of party supporters that scored highest on this index. Next, we split the sample of parties in such a way that the 25% with the highest proportion of opinion leaders is considered high on opinion leadership. Our strict criteria imply that this group of parties truly has a large representation of opinion leaders.

Table 4 demonstrates the importance of opinion leadership for mass–elite linkages. First, the EU stance of party supporters influences party elites only

Table 4 Mass–elite linkages and opinion leadership

<i>Electoral context</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Party elites</i>		<i>Supporters</i>	
		<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
Weak leadership	423	0.155	0.156	0.024	0.027
Strong leadership	112	0.766**	0.160	0.240**	0.090

Notes: Table entries are G2SLS random effects panel estimates and their estimated standard errors. The estimate for party elites is the effect of the EU stance of party supporters. The estimate for party supporters is the effect of the EU stance of party elites. The models include country dummies and other predictors, which have been suppressed in the table (these are available upon request from the authors).

** $p < .01$ (one-tailed).

in parties rich in opinion leaders. If there are comparatively few opinion leaders, then it becomes much more difficult for supporters to have their views represented. Second, the ability of party elites to cue their supporters depends critically on the strength of opinion leadership. Parties starved of opinion leaders are generally parties that have a difficult time cueing their supporters. Thus, when opinion leadership is weak, neither bottom-up nor top-down linkages seem to operate.

This finding has a great deal of political significance when one considers the distribution of opinion leadership across parties. Almost 74% of the mainstream parties score weak on opinion leadership, compared with just less than 50% of the remaining parties. If there is a disconnection between masses and elites, it seems to affect the mainstream parties disproportionately. Of course, these are also the parties that participate more frequently in the government and thus carry more weight in pushing European integration into new territory.

Conclusions

Mass–elite linkages lie at the heart of the politics of European integration. In this paper, we have uncovered evidence that these linkages run in both directions: party supporters influence elites and the reverse is also true. Additionally, we have uncovered evidence that mass–elite linkages are conditioned by a variety of factors, including electoral context, party (system) attributes and attributes of supporters. These findings carry significant weight. At a theoretical level, we have demonstrated that theories of mass–elite linkages on European integration should allow for reciprocal causation and explore the conditional nature of cueing effects. Conditionalities in the

dynamic representation of party supporters carry special weight, since the literature to date has failed to explore them. At a methodological level, we have amended past efforts at estimating mass–elite linkages by explicitly incorporating the time series aspect of elite and opinion data on European integration. As a result, we believe that our estimates provide a more accurate view of the connections between masses and elites.

Finally, our findings are relevant for a practical understanding of the politics of European integration. On the whole, we find very little evidence for allegations that political elites are out of step with the masses when it comes to EU policies. There are strong bottom-up and top-down processes, which cause the EU stances of party supporters and elites to be associated. However, within mainstream political parties, there is more evidence of a disconnection between party elites and supporters. Those parties tend to attract relatively few opinion leaders and, where opinion leadership is weak, so too are bottom-up and top-down linkages.

Of course, our study has limitations. We have discussed only one aspect of mass–elite linkages, namely the connection between national party elites and their supporters. A more comprehensive analysis would also consider connections between party elites and the median voter, between government policies and citizen preferences, and between European parties and voters. Second, our analysis has explored the conditionalities of mass–elite linkages one at a time, rather than pitting them against each other in a multivariate analysis. Third, we lack data for the past three years. Finally, some of the moderators may suffer from endogeneity. For example, why do mainstream parties tend to attract fewer opinion leaders? These issues will have to be addressed in future research.

Despite these limitations, our results are suggestive of the future of European integration. The legitimacy of future integration efforts depends on the maintenance of an effective mass–elite linkage. Although many factors play a role in this linkage, several stand out. First, referendum mechanisms seem to be a useful lubricant of mass–elite linkages. After the end of our study period, the Dutch introduced a consultative referendum. Although the outcome caused some parties to question the wisdom of a referendum, it has actually led to widespread discussions in the parties about how to connect better with their supporters.

Second, inter-party dissent is critical for an effective mass–elite linkage. In this regard, the rise of anti-EU political entrepreneurs may prove beneficial for the European integration process, because they force other actors to engage their base, through either representation or persuasion. Moreover, these entrepreneurs will help to increase the salience of the EU in national and European elections.

Finally, opinion leadership is a key component. Often ignored because it does not seem to affect opinion directly (e.g. Gabel, 1998b), we believe that a reappraisal of the role of opinion leadership is in order. Forging a better linkage between masses and elites may require increasing awareness of and interest in the EU. This will take time and the input of many actors, including the mass media and the EU itself. However, political parties have a role to play in this process, by formulating clear positions, by emphasizing the importance of European integration as an issue, and by demonstrating that they take their supporters seriously.

Notes

We would like to thank Leonard Ray and David Scott for their collaboration on an earlier version of this paper. We would also like to thank Mark Franklin, Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Tjmen de Vries, the participants in the Amsterdam workshop on Euroscepticism, and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

- 1 In examining the influence of intra-party dissent on voter opinion in this issue, Gabel and Scheve also control for reverse causation by means of an instrumental variable approach.
- 2 We would have made the opposite prediction had we focused on mass–elite linkages defined in terms of the median voter (see Adams et al., 2004).
- 3 An alternative approach would be to use vote intention. However, this measure is unavailable for the most recent Eurobarometer surveys. Moreover, vote intention poses methodological concerns because respondents may intend to vote for a party because of its EU stance. This makes it difficult to determine whether a respondent's EU stance is a function of party cues or whether the respondent self-selected into the party because of its EU stance. Identifying the electorate on the basis of ideology does not raise this problem and has the added advantage that we focus not on a party's current electorate but on its potential electorate (Carrubba, 2001). Note, however, that there is an implicit model of voting behaviour here that may not always hold true, namely that votes are cast on the basis of ideology using the proximity of the positions of the voter and the party. Nevertheless, identifying party supporters on the basis of ideology seems reasonable. When we matched predicted vote intentions on the basis of ideology to actual vote intentions when we had data on them, we correctly classified 65% of the respondents (see also Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996: Ch. 20).
- 4 The model does not contain lagged values of the endogenous variables. Apart from the fact that the use of lagged dependent variables has come under attack in recent years (Achen, 2000), the lags in the current data are too large to be meaningful, averaging a little over two years. Moreover, the present approach addresses autocorrelation through a GLS approach. This approach has been shown to work well (Baltagi and Li, 1992), but, as an added security,

we re-estimated the models with year dummies to capture period effects. The results from those models are not fundamentally different as far as the key relationships are concerned.

- 5 Statistically speaking, a random effects specification is appropriate only if the unit effects are uncorrelated with the exogenous predictors. As an empirical matter, this assumption is much more reasonable in the case of party supporters than in the case of party elites. Hence, we re-estimated the models for the party elites using a fixed effects approach. Although the estimates change somewhat, the overall pattern of the results is similar to those reported here.
- 6 An alternative strategy is to create interactions between the moderators and the endogenous variables. These should then be treated as endogenous variables in their own right. The problem is that an accumulation of such interaction terms quickly creates problems because we wind up with more endogenous variables than there are instruments.
- 7 The category of PR systems includes list PR systems with and without thresholds, mixed member PR systems, and Greece's system of reinforced PR. The category of plurality systems includes first-past-the-post, the single transferable vote, and the two-round system that is used in French legislative elections.
- 8 Comparisons of statistical significance should be made with a great deal of care since the sample sizes of the sub-groups are dramatically different.
- 9 We used a median split of the following salience question in the expert surveys: 'During [year], how important has the EU been to the parties in their public stance?'
- 10 We used a median split of the following dissent question in the expert surveys: 'How much internal dissent has there been in the various parties in [country] over the issue of European integration in [year]?' (The question wording in 2002 deviated slightly from this format.)

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